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RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL PRIORITY 2415
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C O N F I D E N T I A L ULAANBAATAR 000634

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/18/2016
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [ECON](#) [CH](#) [MG](#)
SUBJECT: FOREIGN MINISTER COMMENTS ON POSSIBLE DALAI LAMA
VISIT

REF: A. STATE 134383

[1](#)B. ULAANBAATAR 608
[1](#)C. ULAANBAATAR 625

Classified By: Classified by Economic/Political Chief Patrick J.
Freeman, for reasons 1.4(B) and (D)

[1](#)1. (C) Ambassador met with Foreign Minister on August 17 to deliver the paper conveyed in ref a, which responded to the Foreign Minister's request for U.S. perspectives on the likely Chinese reaction to a Dalai Lama visit (ref b). FM Enkhbold expressed appreciation for the report. He did not quite confirm that the Dalai Lama is expected to visit next week (ref c), saying that issuance of the visa was "still under consideration." Enkhbold indicated that the decision to issue a visa for the visit was not an easy one, and was visibly worried over what the Chinese reaction might be. He said the Chinese government had inquired about the press reports the Dalai Lama would visit, but so far had not come in formally; he expected that would happen soon. Enkhbold quoted from a Dalai Lama speech in March which underlined that he sought autonomy for Tibet, but not independence; would that moderate the Chinese reaction, he wondered.

[1](#)2. (C) The Foreign Minister commented that, in view of an expected negative Chinese reaction, he was still struggling with how to explain the decision to all Mongolian constituencies, such as business interests who may be negatively affected. He said that the decision is not even without controversy in Mongolian Buddhist circles, since the Bogd Gegen, Rinpoche, is regarded as the head figure of Mongolian Buddhism.

[1](#)3. (C) Enkhbold asked how the U.S. would respond in the event of Chinese pressure on Mongolia, such as a repetition of the train service interruption in 2002. Ambassador responded that the U.S. likely would reiterate publicly our belief that the Dalai Lama is an international man of peace who should be allowed freedom to travel. Such statements would be unlikely to deter any Chinese pressure -- and any effort at direct U.S. intervention with China probably would worsen matters, not help them.

[1](#)4. (C) COMMENT: While we do believe that Mongolia will grant permission for the Dalai Lama to visit, the Foreign Minister and his government are clearly nervous while they await China's reaction: what will be the price to pay in relations with their much bigger and economically powerful neighbor to the south? We have no doubt that China will soon let them

know. Months after the last visit of the Dalai Lama in November 2002, relations had recovered sufficiently for Hu Jintao to visit Ulaanbaatar, which may be a history that comforts Mongolian leaders as they await China's response. MFA Americas, Africa, and Middle East Director General (A/S equivalent) Jambaldorj told the Ambassador over lunch on August 18 that he doubted China would again suspend rail traffic as it had for a few days in 2002, but would, no doubt, respond in some fashion. END COMMENT.
SLUTZ